

**Louisiana Department of Education**  
Post Office Box 94064 | Baton Rouge, Louisiana 70804-9064  
1-877-453-2721 | Fax: (225) 342-0193

---

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**Date:** 5/7/2004

**Contact:** Doug Myers, (225) 342-3600, Fax: (225) 342-0193

**LEAP 21/GEE 21 SCORES RELEASED**

*High schools show significant improvement*

BATON ROUGE, La. – Louisiana public high school students showed significant, across-the-board improvement and the state's 8th graders improved overall with more passing than the previous year, according to test results released Friday.

The passage rate for 4th graders, facing a tougher promotional standard, decreased. However, the state's 4th graders are still performing much better than they were when high-stakes testing began five years ago.

State officials noted that the passage rate at the 4th- and 8th-grade levels would have been even higher had the state not had to include 3,500 special education students that were previously excluded from the regular testing program. The federal government, through the No Child Left Behind Act, required the inclusion of these students.

Students take LEAP 21 in the 4th and 8th grades and GEE 21 in the 10th and 11th grades. Students who fail to pass the parts of the tests are given additional chances to pass. LEAP 21 is used to determine whether students advance to the 5th and 9th grades, while GEE 21 determines whether students are eligible to graduate from high school.

There are five achievement levels students can attain: Unsatisfactory, Approaching Basic, Basic, Mastery or Advanced. In previous years, 4th-grade students had to be Approaching Basic in English and Math. Now, with the policy change, 4th-grade students must score at least Basic in one of two subjects – English or Math – and at least Approaching Basic in the other subject. To pass the 8th-grade LEAP 21 and the high school GEE 21, students must score at the Approaching Basic level or above.

At the high school level, where the state saw significant improvement this year, results show increased passage rates in all four subjects.

In English Language Arts, 82 percent of students passed in 2004 compared to 78 percent in 2003. In Math, 77 percent of students passed in 2004 compared to 75 percent in 2003. In Science, 81 percent of students passed compared to 78 percent in 2003, and in Social Studies, 84 percent of students passed in 2004 compared to 80 percent the previous year. In addition, more students scored at the Basic and above level than ever before.

"I think our high schools hit a home run this year," State Superintendent of Education Cecil J. Picard said. "Not only did they improve, they made gains in every subject. I am extremely proud of this achievement by our students, teachers, principals and district leaders."

"The high schools did a fabulous job. More students passed and more students performed at the Basic or above level. This amount of growth does not occur very often, so we need to give them deserved recognition for a great year," Board of Elementary and Secondary Education member

Leslie Jacobs said.

At the 8th grade level, the passage rate improved from 72 percent in 2003 to 76 percent in 2004.

At the 4th grade level, where students faced the tougher promotional standard this year, the passage rate declined from 78 percent in 2003 to 66 percent in 2004.

State officials said the inclusion of some 3,500 special education students that were previously excluded had an obvious impact on the results. In 2000, 2.8 percent of the state's student population was allowed to take an alternate assessment under Louisiana's accountability policy.

However, No Child Left Behind mandated policy changes that resulted in only 0.7 percent of students being given an alternate assessment this year, impacting failure rates by as much as two percentage points.

Earlier this year, BESE waived its high-stakes policy for all students who would have taken an alternate assessment.

Education officials stressed that the state's goal is for all students is to achieve at the Basic level or above by 2014, and that a higher percentages of initial test takers reached that mark than in previous years.

"Overall, we've improved, especially in the number of students performing at the Basic and above level. Students who perform at Basic and above are on track to be successful in college and be eligible for TOPS," Jacobs said. "We're phasing in higher standards, and we're seeing more students reaching them."

On the (high school) GEE 21:

- In math, 61 percent of scores scored Basic or above in math in 2004, compared to 59 percent of students in 2003 and 55 percent in 2002.
- In English Language Arts, 60 percent of students scored Basic or above in 2004, compared to 53 percent of students in 2003 and 58 percent in 2002.
- In Science, 57 percent of students scored Basic or above in 2004, compared to 55 percent of students in 2003 and 50 percent in 2002.
- In social studies, 63 percent of students scored Basic or above in 2004, compared to 58 percent of students in 2003 and 52 percent in 2002.

On the GEE, students must pass English Language Arts, math and either science or social studies to be eligible to graduate from high school. Students are first given English Language Arts and math in the 10th grade and science and social studies in the 11th grade. If they fail, students are given additional chances to retake the test.

On the (4th and 8th grade) LEAP 21:

- In 8th grade math, 59 percent of students scored Basic or above in 2004, compared to 52 percent of students in 2003 and 47 percent in 2002.
- In 8th grade English Language Arts, 50 percent of students scored Basic or above in 2004, compared to 54 percent of students in 2003 and 51 percent in 2002.
- In 4th grade English Language Arts, 62 percent of students scored Basic or above in 2004, compared to 61 percent in 2003 and 60 percent in 2002.

- In 4th grade math, 57 percent of students scored Basic or above in 2004, compared to 60 percent in 2003 and 54 percent in 2002.

Jacobs said she's especially pleased with the "tremendous gains" in 8th graders scoring Basic and above in 8th grade math.

"In 1999, only 38 percent of our 8th graders were basic or above in math. This year, 59 percent are. This improvement is significant and exciting," Jacobs said.

"I'm proud of the progress we've made in Louisiana," Picard said. "To me, the bottom line is our high schools performed significantly better, our 8th graders improved and our 4th graders took a small dip at a time when we raised the bar. Overall, the big picture shows these results are another step in the right direction."

Board of Elementary and Secondary Education President Glenny Lee Buquet said local districts, despite having tight budgets next school year, must find ways to improve student performance.

"We must do everything we can to find even more ways to improve student performance," Buquet said. "During tight budget times it is not easy for local districts to protect their classroom investments. So I hope our local school officials will take these scores as an indication that they can not stop investing in student achievement."

Buquet and Picard said the Legislature must continue to prioritize critical investments that support our Accountability Program like pre-K, summer school, and teacher training so that student achievement continues to improve.